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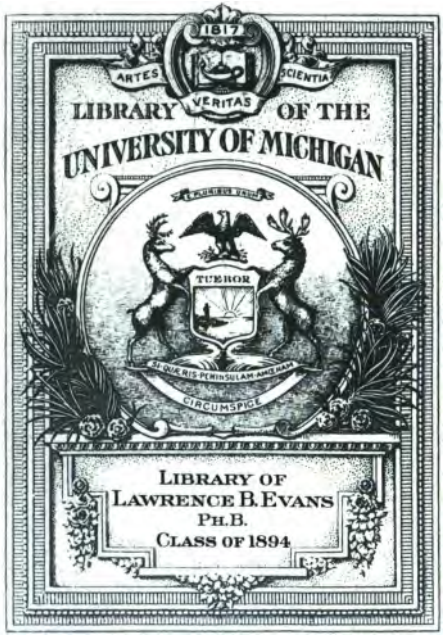

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THE WOUNDED EROS

Sonnets

BY

CHARLES GIBSON

AUTHOR OF

THE SPIRIT OF LOVE AND OTHER POEMS

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

WILLIAM STANLEY BRAITHWAITE

BOSTON

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INTRODUCTION

In these Sonnets, the author has set down the record of a passion which makes one more of those stories of the heart written by the poets who have joined the company of Sir Philip Sidney. The company of poets is a glorious one, and the poetic stories are among the most touching expressions of human experience.

We can find no difference between these great chronicles of the heart, beyond the fact of love winning or losing, except what time has made in the fashions of art between the sixteenth and the twentieth centuries. One cannot believe that the complex psychology in the interpretation of modern love makes that love essentially a different thing in man's nature then in its more primal expression, when social conditions were less reticent and self-conscious in the tameless civilization of the mid-sixteenth century. Here is the ancient and immemorial love of man for woman, whose only change has been the difference between Adam waking to behold Eve beside him and the conventional introduction of the sexes

which the custom of the twentieth century demands. The influence of time upon love is not more literal in the science of sociology than in the art of poetry, and one has but to take a typical Elizabethan amatory sonnet-sequence and compare it with Mr. Meredith's "Modern Love," Mr. Blunt's "Esther," or Mr. Gibson's "The Wounded Eros," to be convinced of this opinion. The elemental note in the great sonnet cycles, from Petrarch's to those of our own day, being the realization of an objective ideal in the opposite sex, with the interpretation of it varying as human society progressed in its ethical, moral, and political aspects, there remains — what has always made the intensity of interest in this poetic form — the circumstance of personality giving tone and temperament to the particulars of this episodic drama of man's heart. Apart from any consideration of the perfection of art in which any series of related love-sonnets may be dressed, this question of the personal attitude compels interest. It is the private chamber of a human heart opened without reserve, for the intrusion of strangers to behold the truth of a bitter or joyous experience, as fate may decree.

In this book of sonnets, there is touched a deep note of pathos in the unrequited passion of a man who tells the circumstances of his own love. It is so before all things, because it is the direct speech of a heart without subtlety. I mean, that he invents nothing that is illusory between himself and the object of his desire. If subtlety had been in the heart of this lover, one might have expected more frequent verbal conceits in the methods of telling his tale; but the lack of them by no means diminishes the importance of its human interest. Indeed, the modern sonnet has gained in this respect over its predecessors of the English Renaissance. And in Mr. Gibson's sequence the interest is entirely a modern one.

These sonnets of the "Wounded Eros" keep, moreover, the dignity that belongs to the character of thought and feeling employed by the best examples. If less abstract in any symbolistic purpose, they gain narratively by allusions sufficiently definite to link each phase of emotion into a story, — the story old, but ever new, of passion in a man's heart for a woman's love, — and the character and progress of it unfolded in associations wholly spiritual. The one here celebrated

leaves us with the impression of being a myth created in the fervent imagination of the poet. Her vague personality hovers in uncertain imagery about the edges of the poet's metaphors. One feels her influence behind the poet's conception of her virtues, her faults, and her physical charms, rather than by gaining any perception of her identity through speech or action. Yet it was around a similar ideal, or vision, that Dante and Petrarch wove stories of devotion and rhapsodic worship: and Shakespeare has been able to mystify the curiosity of three centuries of prying criticism and literary history.

Despite the revelation of the lover's heart in this poem, the poet has veiled, if indeed she exists at all in any world more palpable than Arcadia, the object of his affection behind the profuse chronicling of his own feelings. It is through him the story proceeds for us; his nature acting as an impressionable substance upon which her influence shapes itself into mood and manner. Yet it is more often from memory and recollection — the consecration of a dream — that the image weaves its spell upon the worshipper: —

"Thou wilt not give me
Thy treasured self, more often than the time
Of every year doth change,"

he declares; and for a maiden so obdurate in denying those frequent meetings which are the very Eden of love's progress, we can plainly see how the task became difficult in building the illusion of love between these two people of the imagination.

If it was the woman's indifference which led to such arbitrary allowances of time when she might be visited, we can begin to understand from what source is taken the significance of the author's title. The writer of these Sonnets had, as the reader following his story will discover, his love wounded by all the opposing fates of his passion concentrating in the cruelty and vanity of the woman he loved. That even in these qualities of disposition, however, she was without that self-conscious arrogance which intentionally hurts the feelings of honest and faithful affection, is attested throughout the entire poem by many a gracious allusion. We are prone to consider her innocent of any base premeditated wile or motive; like Keats' Fanny Brawne, she simply

lacked that sympathetic nature which was able to penetrate and appreciate the true worth in the man's heart which fate had laid at her feet.

> "Tell me, in truth, why thou dost still seem fond
> Of me, yet 'neath my heart dost plunge the knife."

This is the paradox in this woman's nature, and a bit of real human nature it is of the gentler sex, the attempt to delineate which has been the theme of much noble music flowing from wounded hearts.

What is the mystery in the perverseness of such natures? Is it the complexity in personality, of which the possessor has neither knowledge nor control? Or is it the enigma of human nature moulded into the subtler diverse forms of the feminine sex? Whatever it is, it offers questions in psychology hard to deal with in any form of art. That it can at least be handled with interest, this poem shows. Mr. Gibson's theme works out in its allotted way the immemorial conflict upon the old battleground. All the forces of individual character and temperament are levied in the pursuit and the evasion; and when in the end comes the surrender or escape, — happiness or despair

in the heart, — there is still the same wonder and mystery of it all, such as man and woman have experienced over and over again since time began. The end of this battle of man's and woman's heart against terms of alliance with the opposite sex is always, and has always been, inexplicable. A force deeper than can be comprehended or controlled — the vital preservation of the human kind — draws them by its inevitable laws towards the completion of its wonderful purpose in mortal existence: and yet the peculiar circumstances of man's intellectual sovereignty over the destiny of his kind have set this purpose into warring factions.

Man never ceasing to follow the sun of his life in woman's heart, his brother shall never cease to take interest in the story of an experience which at one time or another has cast its sunshine or shadow over the daily routine of his existence. In the hidden nooks and memory-places of each man's life there abides the reality or ghost of an ideal, with woman's hair and eyes and voice, cloistered in dreams of virtue and tenderness and inhabiting realms beyond reach and concern of man's workaday world with its

practical and sordid interests. This ideal is carried in secret hours when no man's suspicion can detect the captured joy. It is far too holy a thing to have its birth and growth revealed to the unsympathetic knowledge of any whose hearts are not likewise confined in the prison-cage of a woman's soul. It is left for poets and romancers to look into men's hearts and tell the world the stories of these passions, for which life has given them the capacity to feel and enact, but not the subtlety and precision of speech to express and interpret.

The story of the "Wounded Eros" is, as the reader will discover, the story of an oblation full of inexplicable shadows. Certainly, as the lover relates the progress of his suit against the obstinacy and contradiction in the woman, — so vague in all her influences! — there is considerably less of that heroic attitude in a love-passion which we would be inclined to associate with one who is so unreasonably ill-used. This man is ever the optimistic lover in his despair; constant — even unalterably persistent — in the hope of ultimately touching and winning the sympathy of her nobler self in the woman. True, at times,

because of that unimpeachable self-respect, which is the touchstone of all his dealings with life, he cannot keep silent about her faults of temperament. But the spirit in which he sings of these obvious shortcomings is one to chasten and correct that which does not so much offend his own sensibilities as it blemishes and affects the character and disposition of her womanhood. What true man has ever yet been blind to the faults in the woman he loved! These deepen and enlarge her virtues, since after all she is essentially human beneath the divinity with which the idealization of man envelops her being. But all poets do not conceive the sex so realistically in this respect as Mr. Gibson. Nor in this does he take away anything from the exquisite fascination that surrounds them. He makes, instead, more interesting and piquant those perverse elements in the character of this woman, which furnish the episodical themes for his sonnets to weave their unhappy design upon the loom of his story.

I want to indicate here what seem to me the important qualities in the poem, which are intended both to carry on its development from

one emotional phase to another of the story, and simultaneously to reveal the peculiar personal characteristics of the man and woman. I want to mention them in their detached aspects, because I think they are effective in an unusual way. And while, after a close study of these sonnets, I am convinced of their origin in the imagination, — that is to say, there being no likelihood that the story is of an actually known experience, — I am impressed with the note of sincerity which will convince the reader of the poet's serious and honest treatment of his material.

In the circumstance which ensnares the man's affections as he conceives them, the author finds fate offering no atonement in the end for the bitter trials of faith and patience endured; and in his art the poet offers no compromise to appease the sentimentalist. Truth is too insistent of her rights. Logic is too tenacious, too pitilessly inflexible in its purpose of carrying the intentions of fate to its grievous conclusions. Not at any point in the poem is there the least suggestion that chance will alter the fortunes of this battle of hearts. Only through a heightened sense of moral duty in the woman could there

come that strength of sacrifice which is the test of noble characters, and change the final note of despair into one of exultation. While, as I have said, the author does not attempt to work his art into false attitudes, it is, strangely enough, just this hope which underlies his apparent resignation at the end. He seems somehow to entrust Time to transform the alloy of inconstant youth in the nature of the beloved one into the purer womanhood of maturity, whom a larger experience and deeper knowledge of life will teach to surrender her heart to his constancy, faith, and unwearying devotion.

That there was a prophetic feeling from the very beginning that the fruits of his affection were to be bitter fruits, is suggested in Sonnet VII, where he declares, "Come, though I pay love's price in future pain." And yet, despite this open-eyed acceptance of a task so full of doubt, he can say in the very next Sonnet,—

> "This pen
> Now dedicate to love, thus born again
> Out of thy breast. . . ."

He makes the dedication of his life upon the altar of her heart with all its strange inconstan-

cies. With unquestionable intention she has lured him with the skilfully exercised arts of girlish insouciance. And yet, while her conduct is not exemplary, and should be lightly treated as the dross mixture in the frivolous temperament of maidenhood, it is to be rigorously censured when it continues wilfully to exercise itself upon the serious nature of a man. Although the first thought one has, when doubt and dismay have been the reward of affection, is to be mercifully emancipated from the emotions which still make a woman dear, the heart cannot wholly abandon the ties no longer recognized; and so when, as in Sonnet XIII, he confesses,—

> "I know not how to cast aside the power
> That holds thy presence ever in my thought.
> By night or day, thy coming once hath brought
> Incessant longing for thee every hour.
> Why can I not, in truth, then, overpower
> This sense of something that is vainly sought,
> And still content me with a friendship caught
> From the occasional perfume of a flower?"

we feel in this case that the compromise is made in deference to the woman's lack of self-reliance in being frank. "A friendship caught from the

occasional perfume of a flower" — these lines, the most poetic and significant in the poem, are suggestive of a very subtle pathos; and obdurate as we are in not excusing the woman's frailties, we do pity her weaknesses, much in the same way as our regretful pity spends itself on some beautiful wild flower with faint and wasting odors.

The flower of this lover's heart is one nurtured by the sunlight of the world's opinion. It is not sheltered in the quiet nook of pastoral inexperience with the ways of the urban world. Morally unspotted, it is ethically tainted with all the sophistication of its environment. As in Sonnet XIV, she is seen

> "through the maze
> Of lights and worldly episodes of man,"

it is inevitable that her lover should cry, —

> "Shouldst thou, perchance, peruse these simple lines,
> I wonder even if thy heart would be
> Touched by the pathos of my love, and see
> In them the attitude that love defines,
> Unfettered by the selfish light that shines
> Through many a worldly eye."

And in Sonnet XXIX, where he says she is

"sweeter than are the flowers of spring," that "give a delicate perfume unto the airs," he acknowledges those charms which

> . . . "surprise
> My soul with smiles that banish every gloom,"

yet regretting that one so bountifully gifted with physical charms, and possessing all the polite accomplishments of culture, should be under those influences that are, like a canker, eating the loveliness of soul from her young life.

> "I would that I . . .
> Might pluck thee from thy temporary bed
> Of earthly pleasure, and possess the flower
> Of thy young life, to keep it worthily
> Within the garden of my heart."

Before it is too late he would pluck her from her "temporary bed of earthly pleasure" — she whom Love stands ready to transform into the glory of her sex. The world, he tells her, is a bad school, with all its deceits, rivalries, and petty selfishness, and he who sees her comeliness would protect it from ruin in the "garden of his heart." With all his care and solicitude, with his admirable and untiring sacrifice, she remains unresponsive to the full hope in his soul. There

are the "blessed hours" she brings him, but conferring them only to make him sadder for the brief joy. For, "dying all too soon," they leave him in

> "pain
> For many a day and weary week betimes."

Because she constantly rejects the pressure of his suit, "Refusing strangely love's perpetual flowers," which she will not accept, his whole love seems vain, —

> "Save for th' alleviation of my rhymes."

The solace he takes in rhyme is like an open sluice for the pent-up emotions which he has not been allowed to pour directly into the harbor of her affections. But time goes on and finds her, he declares, "false in thy profession of love's leaven," and ever escaping from the persistent assaults of a determined but irreproachable wooing. "Yet ne'er lose hope, my heart," he says: —

> "Thou shalt succeed,
> So thou persist in thy true quest, until
> All barriers opposing thee do fall."

And what barriers they were, obstructing the realization of this hope! Inconstant as the sea,

with an almost diabolical power to delude and deceive, she seems to take infinite delight in raising the most sanguine expectations only to dash the joy in shattered fragments upon the ground of despair. Take Sonnet LXXI: —

"Thou camest unto me last eventide,
When the dull pain of absence had well-nigh
Made life for me one long-continued sigh —
. . . . . .
Oh! rapture to my soul, more sweet to me
Than glories to the conqueror of a nation!
Behold my dry heart, moistened at the sound
Of thy dear voice — none dearer could there be —
And my sad soul, once more within love's station,
As thy fair form doth twine my heart around!"

Here at last seems the surrender. Now that her "fair form doth twine" around his heart, the very suddenness of victory inspires even in its joy a dubious misgiving; so hard won has it been, that all the past anxiety and pain robs it of half the exquisite realization the event should bring. Whether it is this, indeed, or a spirit of chastisement that the following Sonnet evokes, one does not dare positively to say: —

"Yet now I cannot with impunity
Receive the gilded pleasure of thy love.

God knoweth with what zeal for it I strove.
But when I feel love's sweet community,
It bringeth to me the lost unity —
The loneliness."

Despite the momentary doubt, however, the next six sonnets are rhapsodic in celebration of the perfect union of feeling that binds the two hearts. "For love at last walks hand in hand with me," he sings. And there seems to lurk in all their association the atmosphere of a conviction that happiness is finally to crown their lives. But the charm is snapped. The woman has not yet "drunk the cup of worldly pleasure dry." Betraying his trust again, she proves the fickle baseness of her nature. The wound she inflicts promises to be deep and lasting. The bitter cry in Sonnet LXXXVII, with its splendid opening line, pierces the heart with sympathy for this unhappy man: —

"God, through his offspring Nature, gave me love,
Though man in opposition saith me nay,
And taketh from my heart its life to-day,
As through the valley of the world I rove,
Still unaccompanied."

From here on to the last Sonnet, the final stage

of an unhappy experience is told in many keys of emotion. Somewhat detached, in his resignation to the inevitable, the man now turns upon his beloved a scrutiny of recollection which analyzes her physical and mental lineaments, and weighs each motive actuating her singular conduct. Fair in his judgments of her virtues, there is no hesitancy on his part to censure with rigor her distasteful faults. The good and the bad are so interwoven in her nature as not to be superficially discerned.

She was a creature in whose nature contrary rarities were combined, to exercise upon man powers to excite the highest joy and the deepest despair. She was, as Sonnet CVIII draws her, like "Satan in angelic vestment drest." A maiden with wonderful physical charms, — fair of complexion, from whose blue eyes shone the light of infantile innocence, — snaring the hearts of men to torture them with cold and cruel wantonness. Living for herself, and in herself, she took for granted the homage of the world. Pleasure that came to her through other people's suffering she accepted as the price due one to whom pleasure was ordained at birth.

She never cared to consider life seriously; existence was measured by her capacity for sensation. One wonders how far in this she is a type of the modern woman; or is she merely an exception in the portrayal here? But sad it is that, beneath their frivolous exteriors, such women carry tragedy in their lives as a gift to men.

"Yet love, though long unkind, hath taught me this,
That I may find expression on its page;
Though not the record of its perfect bliss,
Yet, something of its value to mine age,
Mixèd with poison from the fatal kiss
That love still bringeth in its equipage."

The martyrdom has been suffered, and here is the record! It is hoped that something of its value — the lesson of its confession — may become a contribution to the age. Every deep human experience is significant of a moral. How it may affect the conduct of those who come to recognize in it an intimate and personal admonition or justification, depends on how deeply one's sympathy touches the subject in hand.

The world of action is merely the concrete presentation of the illimitable cosmos of ideas;

passion and pain, joy and sorrow,—the emotions dramatized into comic or tragic speech,—are the symbols of the phenomena of instinct, somewhere actively concealed in the vague origins of the human family. Afloat on the swirling current of existence, man's soul is tossed and buffeted by the contrary influences of a rebellious primality. Its forces in the development and growth of civilization are recorded by history, demonstrated by science, and analyzed by philosophy. But art alone expresses and interprets it. Art alone contains that contagious spirit which underlies truth and beauty. It accomplishes this by an essential sincerity in the artist; and find what fault one will with the manner and method in the composition which pretends to the function of æsthetic presentation of life, this sincerity redeems the work.

Little has been said here concerning the manner in which this poem is constructed. The interest of the substance was too inviting for one to be lured into dissecting its form. Artificial as the sonnet-form is, with all its limitations, we have Wordsworth's authority for its many possibilities. There is never any question of the

merits or demerits of a poet's sonnets. If he bends them to the purpose in hand, he achieves his intention, and in this respect the sonnets of the "Wounded Eros" are no exception.

W. S. B.

SONNETS

Farewell! thou art too dear for my possessing.

SHAKESPEARE, Sonnet LXXXVII.

A winged God, all-powerful to-day,
As in the ages past, hath brought my heart
At once the joy of Heaven, yet, with black art,
The curse of Hell; combined in this lay.
Therewith I must content me on my way,
As love its fate doth to the world impart.
And thou, who mayst from busy thought depart,
To read what I in falt'ring verse shall say:
If thou be young, let Cupid crown thy brow
With myrtle green, like love's perpetual wreath;
That thou but little of his wrath may know.
Or, if the years shall bind thee in their sheath,
And with old age thy locks do hoary grow,
In Heaven, thou shalt find what was lost beneath.

I

WHEN in the realm of rich resplendent thought,
The glories of love's paradise appear,
How soon do smiles dispel the midnight fear,
And bring possession of the prize long sought?
Unto the banquet of the heart are brought
Fresh delicacies that to all are dear.
At such a feast, O lover, dry thy tear,
And think no more on battles that are fought.
Let all thy powers celebrate in song
This victory thou hast won from solitude.
Think not of sorrow's pall, nor fate's past wrong
That once delayed thy soul's beatitude.
At Hymen's court shalt thou reside for long,
Since thou art of love's crownèd multitude.

II

I DARE not tell thee half the love I bear,
Stored in this amorous bosom, oh, my heart,
Lest thou believe me mad, and we should part;
As with the one, whose love I first did share.
Stirred in hot haste my heaven to declare,
I wooed too warmly, while young Cupid's dart,
Plunged 'neath my breast, saw happiness depart,
Just as I hoped Love's magic crown to wear.
Long have I mourned; yet now that thou art found,
My folly would repeat its youthful test;
Yea, with a thousand follies, at the sound
Of love, once more begotten in my breast.
Still hold me, Sorrow! Wisdom would resound
Within my soul, and whisper what is best!

III

HOW shall I woo thee, then, thou fairest maid
That e'er did stir a lover true to love?
Fluttering its wings upon the air, a dove
Descends, the emblem of what God hath said
Was peace and love to every man that's made,
To seek on earth some emblem from above;
To strive once more for that for which he strove,
And see the truth of life before him laid.
Thus wouldst thou lead me to some higher way
Than man doth seek, to satisfy desire,
Fanned by the glories of this corporal form,
Made manifest by something that doth say:
"Now let these senses thine own soul inspire,
And brave the turmoil of thy passions' storm."

IV

WITH kisses would I woo thee first and say,
"Come to my garden, thou fair violet flower."
Sweet is th' intoxication of thy power
That bringeth some new fragrance every day:
Nor these embraces would I gladly stay,
At my first thought and knowledge of the shower
Of the living evidences that empower
The loving to assume the lover's way.
But, lest thine own too maidenly reserve
Shall not requite the gladness of my soul,
Blind to all else but that which may preserve
The extasy of love's attainèd goal,
I must needs pause, alas! once more, and serve
Minerva's colder law and pay its toll.

V

HOW shall I ever thank thee for the boon,
Thou wingèd child, that lifted thus my soul,
And quenched the thirst for love, that many a bowl
Of golden wine had failed, alas! too soon,
To satisfy, from eventide to noon?
For I, who lingered near some mossy knoll,
Received thy love-tipped arrow at its goal;
And bare the wound, rejoicing with a tune.
Then bind, fair one, with love thy wounded swain.
Give him thine eyes, but breathe thy soul as well
Into his welcome heart, that beats with pain,
Lest it should have an hapless tale to tell.
Ah! Spare me that, my love, and in thy train
Shall Heaven be wherever thou mayst dwell!

VI

IS it, in truth, a gift from Heaven's hand
That brings thee hither, loved one, to prepare
My heart once more, for something that shall share
The worship which thy being would command?
Behold me, Venus! Measured in the band
Of votaries, at the shrine and in the air
Of myrtle boughs and honey-scented hair,
That make of Love a pleasing fairy-land!
Take me, mine own! But art thou yet mine own,
Though on this couch that holds thee I recline,
To melt in sadness at thy very frown,
And laugh if I but knew that thou wert mine?
Then temperance in thy love! My heart, refrain!
Let wisdom rule if victory should remain!

VII

WHAT wingèd boy hath caught again my heart,
To hold it now in beauty's fair embrace,
Who, with enticing attitude, the place
Of love once more hath wounded with his dart?
Half fearing first, I begged him to depart;
Yet now, enslaved in love's half-hidden maze,
How can I, loving thee, my voice upraise,
And leave behind the vision that thou art?
Come, then, sweetheart, and meet my own caresses;
Come, though I pay love's price in future pain.
Greet me at eve with those delicious kisses,
That bear the realms of Heaven in their train.
Tell me of odors sweeter than thy blisses:
Then, only then, from love would I refrain!

VIII

SOMETHING did tell my soul, though not thy troth,
That I might find in love life's pleasant morning,
Like lovely maid, some flowery grove adorning,
Just as in verse imagination doth.
The thought I treasured in me, nothing loth,
Yet never dreamed that I should find Love scorning
That which I gave; to spurn it without warning,
And crush the flower as lightly as a moth.
May I not yet with gratitude this pen
Now dedicate to love, thus born again,
Out of thy breast, and seemingly to stay?
Thou fair divinity, adored of men,
To death I must consign my banished pain,
And find in thee the fulness of to-day!

IX

IN what uncertain guise doth passion strive
To work in men the mischief of their being;
Even as Satan doth pursue them, fleeing
In fear from their own shadows, while alive.
Yet, from the realm of passion we derive
Something that with true love is well agreeing;
That he who once hath seen is alway seeing,
Tragic, yet like a flower that doth revive.
And thou, my own, whose love doth quicken life
To fragrant sweetness hitherto unknown,
Take me, but half unworthy as I come,
And rule my dear heart's dwelling as my wife.
By deeds the spirit of true love is shown,
Though passion still doth find its earthly home.

X

WITH how distressed a sentiment my heart
Doth think of thee, my heart alone can tell,
Nor easily interpret thoughts that dwell
Within this sorrowing spirit, lest we part,
To meet not as we have, with love's sweet art
Designing pictures in some flowery dell
That held those garlands which from lovers fell;
For every time I think of thee I start.
'T is long since thou didst come, to make my life
A heaven of fleeting rapture in my breast,
Bright as the silvery star, that shines above
The firmament of man's uncertain strife.
Thou tookest from me all that I possest;
Then give me, give me in return thy love!

XI

NOW, should I chance to meet thee passing by,
That holy fear would overcome my soul,
Which poets speak of, as th' attainèd goal
Of love's ideal doth seem to greet the eye.
Still, would we ask our own desire why
We find love's bark oft wrecked upon the shoal,
That lies beneath the quivering waves, that roll
In cold deception of the lovers' tie.
The old familiar wound comes back to me,
My loved one; the neglect (though thou shouldst think
It scarce neglect) stings nightly my poor heart.
Each day is lost that brings no sight of thee.
Must I then once again this goblet drink,
Of love's sweet poison, as we drift apart?

XII

IT is a strange and wondrous thing that brings
Love unrequited to the human heart.
To me it comes; from thee it would depart.
And all the while a stirring song it sings,
Bearing an undescribed refrain that clings,
In unremitting strength, like that sweet dart
Whose love-tipped messenger of life thou art.
It bears to me a memory that stings.
Must I then languish in remembrance of
Those treasured moments of unearthly joy,
That bore me to the realm of magic halls,
Where are reflected images of love?
I trow, thou hast no heart to thus destroy
My own heart's happiness that from thee falls!

XIII

I KNOW not how to cast aside the power
That holds thy presence ever in my thought.
By night or day, thy coming once hath brought
Incessant longing for thee every hour.
Why can I not, in truth, then, overpower
This sense of something that is vainly sought,
And still content me with a friendship caught
From the occasional perfume of a flower?
Oh, lover! ask that question of thyself,
And answer it, in face of nature's calling:
If in all reason thou couldst satisfy
Such craving in thy soul. For I myself
Hold difficult the effort of forestalling
That which I most reluctantly defy.

XIV

I SAW thee yester-even, through the maze
Of lights and worldly episodes of man,
Filling the room with brilliancy, that can
So well adorn thy loveliness, and daze
My wondering eyes, each time I mutely gaze
On thee from far, while all thy treasures fan
This fever of my soul. Oh, cast this ban
Of fear from off myself and hear my praise!
Yet, when at last we met, how cruelly
The fascination of thy careless speech
Pierced my poor heart, held in love's fell disease,
While I, o'erwhelmed by force of loving thee,
Unable wisdom toward myself to teach,
Did tremble in thy presence, ill at ease.

XV

DOST have no heart, sweet one, to visibly
Perceive the romance of my life's desire,
To formally within thy breast inspire
That reverence for love, which is to me
The holiest element 'twixt those who see
The spiritual, earthly things attire?
Thus, in my longing soul, I would aspire
To capture thy fair being finally.
Ah! may that day be mine, before life's morning
Ends, all too soon, the power to attain
By physical endearment thy sweet soul:
Thy heart my own, and mine thy life adorning
With all the gifts of love, that appertain
To the ideal of love's own sacred goal!

XVI

DOST cherish something in thy heart for me,
Loved one? Then give it, lest the time should pass,
And we lose something we should have. Alas,
How often is this futile aim to be
Destroyed by that still dangerous enemy
Of love's best happiness: the fatal glass
Through which the hours fall? Ah, let it pass
Not thus that Nature meant that we should be!
If, in thy character no longing comes,
For interchange of confidence or love,
How can love live, unnourished by the draught
Of that which forms the happiness of homes?
If in thy spirit thou couldst but approve,
Then take this cup that willingly I quaffed!

XVII

HOW delicate a passion in the heart
Is this, conceived beneath the roughest form!
Yet, while the sentiment of love is warm,
We feel the force of sorrow, should we part.
Thus would it seem to me, whene'er thou art
Occasionally ruffled by the storm
Of my desire, swiftly to inform
Thy spirit of the love which I impart.
Turn not thy head, fair one, away from me;
Nor at my words condemn the soul's desire,
That drives from man all thought of other things.
Torn by my passion, I would willingly
Cast all earth's treasures to th' eternal fire,
If I might once fly heavenward on thy wings!

XVIII

TO me thou art an angel, borne to earth
By some fair chance that fans the summer wind.
Thus would thy magic power upon me bind
The tendrils of my heart about thy birth.
There is, indeed, in thy fair soul no dearth
Of the divine incentive to be kind,
I veritably do believe, but find
Unutterable sorrow in thy worth.
An angel I have told thee that thou wert;
Yet thou denied the truth of my true saying,
That thou possessed the beauty of the gods.
Was it more true — ah, how my heart is hurt,
To half believe that thou, like Satan playing,
Couldst set at naught love's holiest periods!

XIX

IS it then given to some, life's happiest hours
To blissfully enjoy, in love's delight?
Behold, ye gods! I look upon the sight!
I swoon and die, to feel that nature's flowers
Do, in my own experience, their powers
Of giving fragrance lose within the night.
Yet would my heart reveal the lover's plight,
And seek, in thy pursuit, celestial bowers.
Oh, tell me that thou art not cold and dumb
To my entreaties for one little part
Of what thou holdest in impiety!
Here at thy feet, I beg but for a crumb
Of love's own comfort, for this aching heart,
That doth deserve its full satiety.

XX

HAVE I not loved thee truthfully enough,
Sweetheart? How canst thou willingly deny
That through love's intercourse I did comply
With every whim of thine? Couldst thou rebuff
The tenderness of love with paltry stuff
That men do flatter with, and thus defy
Far holier elements of life? Ah, why
Dost thou prefer a hand still stained and rough?
Is it not that, surrounding thee, are many
Who think less deeply than my heart would go,
To find a kindred being in the air
Of sacred treasures, that but few, if any,
Seek in this life (and thus their folly show),
While we might still love's habitation share?

XXI

SHOULDST thou, perchance, peruse these simple lines,
I wonder even if thy heart would be
Touched by the pathos of my love, and see
In them the attitude that love defines,
Unfettered by the selfish light that shines
Through many a worldly eye. Perchance if she,
To whom my love is given, comes to me
In after years, while still my heart repines:
Ah then, how can I tell what memories
May not have saddened all that makes life cheery?
How can I know, it will not be too late,
And that, by then, these loving reveries
Disperse with time, when I am old and weary
Of my stern race with life and sterner fate?

XXII

IF love too oft repeats itself herein,
These verses testify to my dear cause;
To eagerly acclaim, but never pause,
In this belated quest, if I would win.
Let it not then be counted as a sin,
Should this one word occur in every clause,
That doth my heart describe with truth, because
No other dwells so fittingly therein.
For if not thus, how else may lovers speak,
Save in that self-same language, recognized
By all who have experienced the fire
Of love's sweet passion, which, though strong or weak,
Gives that with which all men have sympathized,
And still on earth doth every soul inspire?

XXIII

HOW true it is that every joy we feel
Carries its own full price of equal pain,
And brings to us some sorrow in its train.
I thought me safe from love, yet now I kneel
Before thy lovely being, and conceal
But little of that joy which I obtain.
Still what I have seems mixed with thy disdain.
How can I then unto thy soul appeal?
If it is but the force of my disease
That makes me over-sensitive with thee,
And causes me to suffer at thy frown,
Or long thy fleeting anger to appease,
'T is difficult for my blind love to see
How best with jewels thy fair head to crown!

XXIV

YET why repine? 'T is he who laughs that wins.
The careless, gay, unfeeling company
Of men who think not of emotion, see
Th' accomplishment of their unholy sins
Bring from the many an applause that dins
The voice of one poor soul, who lives to be
Truer to nature's homily than he
Who cares not how love's happiness begins.
Then let me sing with gayety and smile;
Though hard it be to mask my agony
Of loneliness, when thou art otherwise
Engaged. Assist me, Eros, to beguile
This heart, that cares more for the company
Of those who would be neither great nor wise!

XXV

OH, for the longed-for moment that might bring
Thy soul in closer touch or tune with mine,
And, in the fulness of its love, entwine
Our hearts in one eternal praise; to sing
Love's pæan unto God! An angel's wing
Were better suited to thy form, to shine
In Heaven's brilliancy, and make divine
That which thy soul upon this earth would fling.
Whatever change of heart may come to thee,
Thou fairest of earth's flowers, my beloved,
Think not to find me absent from thy side,
In that blest hour, which I have prayed to see;
Nor shrink, from fear that I may be removed
From thy dear shrine, whatever may betide.

XXVI

OH heart, hast thou no liberty, to gain
That which thou seekest so persistently?
'T is now full many a year, insistently,
That thou dost search for love's maturer fane.
Art thou thine own to be refused again
By nature's rude requital now to thee:
This poor return for love's best gift? Ah me!
Why should she turn thy pleasure unto pain?
'T is only then by loving me that thou,
Dear one, canst save me from eternal fire:
Unending grief from which I may not rise,
Save by the glad acceptance of a vow
From thee; to turn Hell's flame to Heav'n's desire,
That those who love shall win Love's sacred prize.

XXVII

DEAREST of dearer things, that are to me
More dear each hour that my spirit grows
In its intensity of love, and flows
With warm desire; thy true love I would see,
Crowning that which I oft have wished to be
Th' attainment of my life. He little knows,
Who hears of me from enemies and foes,
How true is my own soul's sincerity.
For I had rather brave the fires of hell,
Than know that thou shouldst never come to me,
With love's embraces in thy fair blue eyes,
And that on earth I ne'er should hear thee tell
My grateful spirit, how thou mightest be
That which alone hath power to quench my sighs.

XXVIII

FOR there is that in man which doth desire
Some time, in every heart, the play of love:
The emulation of his life above,
Before he came to earth, here to aspire
To something unattained, and feel the fire
Of untaught passion, his new being move
To sorrow, that it doth so ill behoove
The sense of love to suddenly inspire.
For who so harsh, that he denies th' embrace
Of beauty's arms about his melting form;
Or doth refuse the loved one's proffered kiss,
When, half reclining, she would seem to chase
All care from off this earth, in one fair storm
Of loveliness, whose presence is true bliss?

XXIX

SWEETER than are the flowers of spring, that bloom
In all their fragrance underneath the skies;
Fairer than all those glories that arise
From earth, to give a delicate perfume
Unto the airs, that by their birth assume
New life and joyousness; I would surmise
To be thy charms, which frequently surprise
My soul with smiles that banish every gloom.
I would that I, one half as easily,
Might pluck thee from thy temporary bed
Of earthly pleasure, and possess the flower
Of thy young life, to keep it worthily
Within the garden of my heart, and wed
Thy true love to my own far greater power!

XXX

CONSIGN me not, while honoring thy love,
To the sad realm of lovers who have lost
The prize, that oft to them their life hath cost;
Nor send me from th' Olympian height above
This poor, imperfect life wherein we move,
Deep down into the nether world. At most,
Have pity on a lover that thou dost
Not have the heart to readily reprove.
My own, my loved one, oh, receive from Heaven
That which I pray for nightly, ere I lay
My suffering soul to rest! I would that I
Had power to give what Nature hath not given
To thy dear self, and that this looked-for day
Might yet be borne upon thee, by and by!

XXXI

WAS it with joy or with time's false relief,
That I perceived the presence of thy being,
Clothed all in charm, once more alone, and seeing,
Beheld in thee both happiness and grief?
For surely, Cupid, thou art but a thief,
To steal from man his heart, and, with it fleeing,
Reduce him to love's penury, agreeing
The while to soon replace his lost belief.
Loved one, thou bringest with thee pleasant hours,
That, dying all too soon, leave me in pain
For many a day and weary week betimes;
Refusing strangely love's perpetual flowers;
Without the which my love for thee seems vain,
Save for th' alleviation of my rhymes.

XXXII

DOST thou not feel some longing in thy breast
For an affection that on earth must play
The part of Heaven's imitation, yea,
The power on which true love must surely rest?
How willingly would I thy spirit wrest
From its cold prison house, and wake to-day
Some sentiment in thee, that should not say
My love was but a visionary quest!
What power can make thee understand, that I
Do feel for thee all Heaven and Hell combined
In one magnificent emotion here,
And that thou mightest profit well thereby,
Couldst thou but recognize the love confined
Within thy heart, and cause it to appear?

XXXIII

EVEN could to-day have brought thee unto me
But for one fleeting hour, I might rest
In the enchantment of thy bliss, and best
Enjoy this marking of the years that see
A quest of love, that from my birth must be
The strongest passion stirred within my breast.
Still, though my soul this prayer to thee addrest;
Thou wouldst not to so slight a gift agree.
And yet, how little honor, fame, compare,
In satisfaction to this longing heart,
With one delicious moment in thine arms!
Tormenting vision of the holy air
Of heaven, from which on earth we soon do part;
While nothing the uneasy spirit calms!

XXXIV

DEAR heart! why dost thou shun my own desire
To be with thee each hour of every day,
Each day in every year, and with thee play
The game of love thy beauty would inspire?
I cannot now extinguish the sweet fire
That burns within my soul. To thee I say,
I am in an imperishable way
Thy faithful friend, whose love shall never tire.
Dost thou then fear committal to be mine,
Even for a space, lest scandal touch thy name?
No thought is further from my wish towards thee.
To make our sweet companionship, in time,
Ripen to all that life may bring to fame,
Is my intention for thyself and me.

XXXV

WHAT fault within me dost thou cultivate?
What still reject, though I assure my heart,
That I am all thine own, and not in part
The man thou dost possess and captivate?
Still, while I thank the gods, I would berate
The irony of nature that doth start
In me the wound that Cupid's fiery dart
Hath caused to flow, and mourn it, now too late.
Why must the mistress of emotion give
To one a portion of divine desire,
And to another an unending flow
Of love's untempered thought, that cannot live,
Save in some reservoir, that must inspire
The whole of thy fair being love to know?

XXXVI

LOVED one, though thou shouldst spurn me as a thing
Unworthy of affection or regard,
Think not alone that vanity may guard
Thy spirit from the friend that thou wouldst fling
So heedlessly aside. For life may bring
Its own swift sorrow, sad, or cold, or hard;
Then mayst thou think, perchance, of that young bard,
Who came to thee, his song of love to sing!
And when thy heart repine thee, if it doth,
Take from my own the sorrow thou hast given,
Like to a travesty of happiness,
Devoured in its fulness by a moth,
That eats the leaf from off the tree of Heaven,
And leaves the soul of man in loneliness!

XXXVII

DIDST have, for me, one fleeting hour of love?
Then conjure to thyself that thought again;
Nor from its own sweet constancy refrain,
Till earth and air, and everything above
This hemisphere of human hearts, doth have
No longer any substance in its train.
Toward this ideal I willingly would strain
Each nerve, my soul from endless grief to save.
Sweet, honeyed flower, whose breath, to me divine,
Makes earth at once seem Heaven, that Heaven thyself;
Bring me the fragrance of thy scented being,
More full of fair sensation than sweet wine,
That doth entice new torments to myself;
And give to me what I, half blind, am seeing.

XXXVIII

AH me! Sad fate doth overcome my soul,
As the old year now passeth from my sight,
And many a hope lies dying with its flight,
To hear the death-knell of the hours toll.
Even as the sounds upon the night airs roll,
Death giveth place to birth, and Love's delight
Is born, in some young heart, that soon may plight
Its simple troth, and reach the promised goal.
I would that, with this old year, there might die
In me all sorrow, or desire to have
That which I may not soon possess as mine,
Or that this hour new-born might still defy
My own well-founded fear, that thy true love
Should never once through life upon me shine!

XXXIX

AND now what hope have I to touch thine heart,
As the new year brings joy to every land?
What chance is there that thou shouldst understand
That which defies my power to impart
To thy dear self its meaning, though I start
To win anew with love thy treasured hand?
Like some uncertain pebble on the sand,
I find me now, tossed by the waves that part.
Oh! canst thou not, sweet pearl upon the ocean
Of love's resistless power to possess
All men in its divine and fair embrace,
Perceive my unmistakable devotion
To thy sweet self, and give but one caress
That might so easily thy presence grace?

XL

HOW often have I asked, through this past year,
If all that I have suffered did repay
My fleeting joy of Heaven for a day;
That made thy soul at once to me more dear
Than all else in the whole wide world. I fear
That, in my heart, I may not truly say
It brought Love's recompense within its way,
Or caused the lowering of Love's sky to clear.
And yet, although thou wouldst misuse my love,
Without apparently one real regret,
How shall I, loving as I do, despair
That thou mayst still, some happy day, disprove
The charge that stains thy name: soon to forget
That which thou wert the first one to declare?

XLI

METHINKS the saddest of all pains to bear
Are those which break in twain the lover's heart,
Which cling to life when love from life doth part,
And cause it to take sorrow for its share.
In vain do men go forth, in dim despair,
Seeking to extricate Love's poisoned dart
From some dark spot whence it would not depart,
And still return to find it fastened there.
O god of Love! Some mercy to thy swains
Show in the hours of agony they feel!
Couldst thou but suffer half they do endure,
Or feel in part the measure of their pains;
With something, thou wouldst try their wounds to heal,
Or else endeavor thy disease to cure!

XLII

AS the wild waves roll o'er some rock-bound coast,
And break in futile effort to possess
Something beyond their reach, I must confess
Am I in my fierce passion, that can boast
No more of thee than surging seas at most
Do find as they rebound in their distress,
Half-clothed in weeds and winter's sombre dress;
So often have I thought thy love was lost!
Yet, at one little word or smile from thee,
These winter storms do change to summer seas,
And I am softened in a moment's time.
So would the magic of thyself give me
A sweeter sentiment, that still doth please
More than the summits of desire to climb.

XLIII

WHILE sad at heart, that thou wilt not give me
Thy treasured self, more often than the time
Of every year doth change; thy lover's crime
I still may countervail, while I do see
Thy lovely form once more, enclosing thee
Reclining in my arms, and leave sad rhyme
For power to rejoice, that love sublime
Hath still returned again to solace me.
If not thyself, let that remembrance come:
The holiest hour that I have known in life,
When all I felt were God and Heaven and thee,
To still remain, when thou dost leave my home,
That without thee is only a sad strife
'T wixt my desire and that which cannot be.

XLIV

WHEN clouds disperse, and sunshine fills the sky,
Then doth my heart think fittingly of thee;
And I imagine that thou think'st of me,
As one who loveth for eternity.
Fair one, could this but be a certainty,
No longer would I crave in vain to see
The face of Heaven after death, but be
Forever on this earth while thou wert by.
Ah! but such dreams of happiness disperse,
Like visionary clouds upon the air
That warms with sunlight o'er some summer's day,
And chills again, as doth my passing verse,
Whenever thou refusest Love's sweet lair,
To which thou know'st so well the only way!

XLV

SHOULD I return, and find once more that thou
Wert willing to become but half my bride,
With what swift pace would I, in gladness, ride
O'er the salt seas or coursing streams, that plough
Their way 'twixt rocky chasms, and endow
Their passage with those dangers that betide
Love's course, as we pursue it side by side.
Sweetheart! What would I give to see thee now!
And yet how sad, this knowledge that I hold,
From past experience, within my heart:
That even should I be within thy reach,
Thou wouldst not make one effort to enfold
Mine arms in thine, cold maiden that thou art!
How then, at last, love to thee shall I teach?

XLVI

WHAT God hath made thee half of graven stone,
Half godlike, His own image to portray
That thou shouldst so continually stray
From every love-shaft that my verse hath thrown
For these long years toward thee, and still disown
The very sentiment that thou dost say
Moves thee to love, though in some other way
Than I to thee in my full heart have shown?
Loved angel, of some sphere so far beyond
The sordid realm of this poor fleeting life,
That thou art some fair spirit clothed with form,
Tell me, in truth, why thou dost still seem fond
Of me, yet 'neath my heart dost plunge the knife
Of love's sad torture, and my spirit storm?

XLVII

CANST thou not feel the tragedy of love,
That followeth the train of thy delay
To give what thou hast owed, full many a day,
Unto my patient soul; that surely strove
Last year thy loving sentiment to move
Toward something higher than mere passion's sway?
How canst thou then, in truth, to thine heart say
Thou hast fulfilled the duty of true love?
I fear me that, like many, thou dost find
A cruel joy in breaking this poor heart,
Whose only crime is that it loves too well.
Dost feel no obligation to be kind
To those who honor thee, nor to depart
From evils that no mortal can foretell?

XLVIII

TO-MORROW I must journey for a space.
A year it seemeth, though a month it be;
For in it thou remainest far from me;
Nor shall I once behold thy lovely face,
Whose coming doth so well my chamber grace;
But feel the hope, oft vain, that I may see
Some passing vision, or something of thee,
Which each new day I live doth grow apace.
Ah! Thou didst come with others to my shrine,
Even as the sun did set this afternoon,
And give to me one of those rare delights,
That move my soul to lose itself in thine;
Like some fleet harbinger of Love, that soon
Departs from me for many days and nights!

XLIX

FOR what strange purpose hath God sent this longing
Unto my soul, for thy most precious love,
To raise it suddenly to realms above,
And then deliver it to one belonging
More to the realm of Satan's world, destroying
The fair ideal that all my life I strove
To realize? Oh, cause me to remove
This spell that is no happiness employing!
  Yet who that falleth in love's meshes knoweth
Why he hath fallen, or from whence he fell,
Or who in truth can understand love's reason,
Save that some joy and pain it often soweth;
The most of which we cannot always tell,
When they at first appear in love's sweet season.

L

HOW little comfort is there in the thought,
Kind friends so often give love's bleeding heart:
That love's sharp pain grows less whene'er we part,
And leave behind the prize so dearly bought!
Yet who doth learn this lesson he hath taught,
So that when love shall send its subtle dart
Within his soul, he may the same impart
Unto himself, and leave what he hath sought?
I know but few, among them not myself,
Who practise this sad cure for love's disease,
That do not bear some wound, in after years,
More painful than love's wounding pain itself;
Or that do find elsewhere, what doth appease
The hunger in their souls, or dry their tears.

LI

FOR each long league that bears me far from thee
Doth seem to take life's blood from out my veins,
As every yearning hour that passeth drains
The spring of my affection, that might be
O'erflowing with love's precious remedy.
Ah me! This is a grievous fate that stains
Love's half-possessed ambition, and remains
To overshadow all that rests of me!
Loved one, I find not, as the world I roam,
A spirit half so comforting as thine,
Ev'n in thy moments of most wilful charm,
None that would half so fittingly my home
Grace with its presence, or from whose eyes shine
A sweeter light, while giving love's alarm.

LII

WHEN last I saw thee, thou wert uppermost
In every thought that stirred my inner being,
In every act thy presence I was seeing.
And now thou comest to me like a ghost,
While I receive thee as some phantom host;
For every time I touch thee thou art fleeing
Far from the tempest of my heart; agreeing
With some sad fate that happiness hath lost.
Now, though I strive to sever from my heart
Those elements divine that make thy love
For me the object of my life's desire,
There cometh that, which doth from Heaven depart,
To lift me once again to Heaven above,
And thus forbid that I should quench love's fire.

LIII

O MIGHTY Prophet, who dost signify
To little man the vanity of life,
The folly of its temporary strife,
Give to the only one who doth deny
My love some passing sense, to gratify
The constant longing that is ever rife
Within my soul, and sever with a knife
This fatal cord, my love is fettered by.
With some such prayer to thee would I appeal,
In impotence, to strike 'gainst nature's law,
That causeth love unhonored still to live.
Before thy throne now humbly do I kneel,
As at the feet of her whom I adore,
And pray that love to me thou still mayst give.

LIV

IF thou hadst felt toward me as I to thee,
Since the first hour that love knocked at my heart,
And I, unwilling, opened it in part,
Then would all Heaven's warmth have been to me
As noon-day sun upon some tranquil sea;
And every hour its blessing would impart
To both our souls, that never could depart
Till we had cast it from us willingly.
Then why, Sweet Love, should this not still be so?
A great ideal perchance we both conceive,
And striving, each in some vain way, to find,
Lose youth's enduring treasure here below.
Why mayst thou not, then, in thy heart perceive
That thou art to thyself and me unkind?

LV

LIKE the soft air of summer is thy smile,
That, lighting on my sadness, clears the air,
To make this clouded life again seem fair,
With all thy deft enchantments, that beguile
The swains that follow thee for many a mile.
But with thy sunshine I find lurking there,
Something in thee that bringeth deep despair,
Seeming to savor of young Cupid's wile.
Then hath he not, mayhap, enveigled thee
Into the mischief of his lover's net,
And caused thee to torment thy swains anew,
With tricks, of which thou mayst the author be?
'T would seem as if some love-snare he had set,
To wreck the lives of lovers not a few.

LVI

IF every song I sing seems tinged with sadness;
If every hour I think of thee I sigh;
If I for love still grieve, ask me not why
I do not sing to-day in joy and gladness;
Nor tell me, if not so, that it is madness.
For such strange action would my heart belie,
And from my spirit ring a love-sick cry
Against so fair a semblance of its badness.
If reason thou wouldst have, ask thine own self
Why thou dost keep me, in love's penury,
Upon the desert of my great desire,
And, like some oasis, receive myself
At distant spaces of its memory—
To burn my soul with an unquenchèd fire!

LVII

LIKE the new moon, cold mistress of the heaven,
A silver bow delightful to behold,
Art thou, sweet maid, sweet both to young and old,
Yet false in thy profession of love's leaven;
Untrue to one who, true to thee, hath striven
(Since first thy love thou didst to him unfold)
To keep thee from becoming chill and cold
As the swift snows that by the winds are driven.
At times it seemeth thou dost act a part;
Now to deceive the depth of my life's passion;
Now loving as no lover did before.
Then suddenly within my soul thou art
Like some ideal that God alone could fashion;
But with the moon depart to shine no more.

LVIII

AH Love! Couldst thou but greet me every even,
And let thine eyes lose those soft rays in mine;
Couldst thou but share with me this bread and wine,
Or something of what God to me hath given,
Then might I feel, that not in vain was driven
This love-shaft in my soul; for it would shine
With gratitude, and round thine own entwine
The fairest flowers that e'er were grown in Heaven.
Had I but thee to share my pain with me,
Pain would be joy, and joy that pain dispelled.
Were thy dear form beside me, night and day,
Then could I grieve no longer, but would be
So happy, happiness would be impelled
To change my spirit in some magic way.

LIX

LOVE is not passion; nor is passion love.
The two are twined together in some wise.
Love, spiritual, cometh from the skies,
Ennobles life and lifts our thoughts above.
Passion we find oft lurking in some grove,
Where pleasant sights draw forth our pleasing cries,
And where some bird of plumage round us flies,
While we, half knowing, through the shadows rove.
Yet, with these two, we find ourselves on earth.
One seldom doth the other disengage.
Strange combination of life's heaven and hell!
That giveth unto man his power of birth,
And causeth him to claim his parentage
Whenever, or where he may chance to dwell.

LX

WHAT subtle fragrance, like some passion flower,
Lurks in the petals of thy love for me,
That seemeth every day more sweet to be,
Thou beautiful example of the power
That nature hath, with loveliness to shower
Her favored ones? I would that I might see,
In those blue eyes that show so much of thee,
Some deeper color, given as a dower.
Yet ne'er lose hope, my heart. Thou shalt succeed,
So thou persist in thy true quest, until
All barriers opposing thee do fall.
Ah, then in vain no longer shalt thou plead!
But of love's welcome draft drink to thy fill,
And, in that hour, know life doth give thee all.

LXI

UNTO the sea my love I would compare,
That shineth first beneath the morning sun,
And danceth with its beams, as if for fun.
Then as the clouds would turn them to despair,
The beams soon disappear upon the air,
Like fairy jewels, that away would run.
Then, as their beauty doth its surface shun,
It heaves as if it doth some sorrow share.
Far down the sea of mine own love doth sink;
But, soon returning on itself, a wave
Of real emotion rolleth o'er my heart;
And all that thou hast been to me, I think,
Is like some treasure I must strive to save,
And guard thee well, so thou canst ne'er depart.

LXII

THERE is a lovely avenue of trees,
That winds its way o'er many a meadow-land,
And leads in time to the salt sea and sand,
Where I have walked and felt the summer breeze
Waft the sweet air that fans with perfect ease
The trembling leaves, the ferns on every hand;
A place wherein might sport some fairy band,
And in their gaiety my fancy seize.
In some such place would I find love awaiting,
Ready to guide me by the trickling brooks,
And lead me to some soft and rustic lair.
With thee, my well-beloved, would I be mating
(Like birds in springtime 'neath the shaded nooks),
The vision of thy love to my despair!

LXIII

UPON the highland spaces greet me, Love,
And with the fir and hemlock all around thee,
Twine thy fair self about my soul, and be
Therein the wood-nymph of my rustic grove.
Now dost thou fly towards me like some sweet dove,
Lighting from branch to branch, and willingly,
A group of blossoms bringing unto me
From the ethereal atmosphere above.
'T is in the air of nature then that we
Find through its simple pleasure love's delight,
Free from the turmoil that doth find its birth
In following the paths that others see.
Then would the stars illuminate the night,
And turn to Heaven the very things of earth.

LXIV

WHEN the red sun sinks toward the western line,
That separates our vision of the sky,
And each soft ray far from the earth would fly,
To touch the clouds above the salt sea-brine
With magic tones and colors half divine;
Then doth my soul seek thine alone, and try
These tears of disappointed love to dry,
Imagining that life on me doth shine.
Then in the clouds, o'er Love's blue sky, reflecting
The golden radiance of thyself, I see
Some likeness to the blood-stains on my heart,
That thou hast pierced and wounded, while rejecting
The sunbeams of my spirit, given to thee,
That hold thy glory, even as we part.

LXV

WHENEVER thou dost let a passing thought
Inhabit the domain of my desire,
I wonder just how thou mayst then inquire
Within thy heart, as yet untouched though sought,
How great love's sacrifice, to have been brought
So strangely to thy life, and set on fire
The soul of one who doth thine own admire,
Although thou givest in return but nought.
Were it but given to thine eye to see
The splendor of love's passion in its prime,
Burning upon the rock of thine own being,
Nature might then increase her power in thee,
And thou might'st find a summit here to climb,
That would eclipse all objects thou art seeing.

LXVI

IF in the years to come life bringeth thee
Some of love's sorrow, to carry in thine hand;
If thou shouldst thus experience it, and
By its strange weight, be forced to think and see
What youth casts from it in its extasy;
Then only couldst thou learn to understand
How suffering hath held me in its band,
Since I first found how cruel love could be.
Ah me! Though by this means thou mightest come
To know the value of love's equipage,
And in its chariot ride toward my soul,
I would not wish that thou shouldst know, as some
Like me have known, from youth to hoary age,
The price they pay to reach so dear a goal.

LXVII

OH! when the cold, fleet-footed hour of dawn
Awaketh me once more to consciousness,
My first thought is of thee, but with distress;
And every thought that followeth (from morn,
Till night her robe of darkness 'round hath drawn)
Is still of thee, of thee I do confess,
Clothed in sweet love's most tantalizing dress;
Yet of love's satisfaction stripped and shorn!
Then doth each hour in withered hope pass by,
Each day and week and month seem endless death.
And when thou answerest not my call to thee,
I watch, till hope dead in my heart doth lie;
For it would seem some evil spirit saith,
That I forever in love's hell must be.

LXVIII

IF, when thou hast found out that life is sorrow,
More frequent than youth's careless jollity,
And when thou pay'st its bitter penalty,
And on thy cheek Time draweth his deep furrow,
Perchance thine own experience may borrow
From mine some of love's rare humility.
Then be not in that hour at enmity
With all that is most worthy of the morrow.
For so hath haughty youth in age to bow,
And unto life do homage for its power,
And grovel in great shame when it doth find
Its fancied value Time doth not allow,
Ah! then mayst thou not pluck so false a flower;
Nor say, "To me love hath been so unkind!"

LXIX

WITH what despair thou hast inspired my muse
In these sad lines, my muse alone can tell.
For were I to describe to thee the spell
Thine eye hath cast upon me, thou wouldst choose
The power of raillery that thou dost use,
To shatter thoughts, my spirit would not sell
For those, far greater, which the poets foretell,
Oft in their verse Love's magic doth infuse.
But all that I hold now within my realm
Of art is thee, that art thy power alone,
To make my lines reflect the hours of spring;
Or yet again with sadness overwhelm.
For when thy heart seems graven, as in stone,
My holiest thoughts to earth their hopes would fling

LXX

HOW sweet to me are these soft days of spring;
But how much sweeter, did thy beauty bear,
Like cherry blossoms o'er the flowering air,
Its scented fragrance to me; and did bring
Some songs of love, like birds upon the wing,
To tell me that my love, with thine, might share
These lovers' hours, that in the spring appear,
And o'er the earth their efflorescence fling.
Ah, Love! thy winter's waiting hath well-nigh
This heart of mine, for love of thee, so broken,
That it hath scarce the power to beat to-day.
'T were time, indeed, to compensate my sigh
At last with Love's unutterable token,
That shall not with the seasons fade away.

LXXI

THOU camest unto me last eventide,
When the dull pain of absence had well-nigh
Made life for me one long-continued sigh,
And given me but little hope to hide
The hideous thought, that never to my side
Wouldst thou again spontaneously fly.
Still, some o'erpowering contact bid me try.
And lo! success my efforts did betide.
Oh! rapture to my soul, more sweet to me
Than glories to the conqueror of a nation!
Behold my dry heart, moistened at the sound
Of thy dear voice — none dearer could there be —
And my sad soul, once more within love's station,
As thy fair form doth twine my heart around!

LXXII

YET now I cannot with impunity
Receive the gilded pleasure of thy love.
God knoweth with what zeal for it I strove.
But when I feel love's sweet community,
It bringeth to me the lost unity—
The loneliness, when I no longer have
Near me thy spirit sent me from above,
To test through pain my soul's immunity.
Then, though this cup of joy be mixed with sorrow,
Once more must I drink of its poisoned draft,
Whilst praying unto God to purify,
With thy return of love to me, the morrow,
That holds the price of that which I have quaffed;
And for all time my spirit satisfy.

LXXIII

WHILE thou art near to me, my spirit's bride
Art thou. No mortal can possess thee now,
Loved inspiration of my life! I trow
Thou lovest me while we are side by side.
No sorrow surely will this eve betide.
Love's heaven only our two hearts shall know,
And for one hour leave life gladly so,
As o'er the surface of love's lake we glide.
Ah, loved one! An emotion my heart swelleth,
Even as I worship at thy sacred shrine,
Which is the noblest life hath brought to me;
So great, so holy, that no pen e'er telleth,
Till God hath given man a sight of thee,
And shown him one who seemeth half divine!

LXXIV

WHILE I gaze in thy dancing eyes, I seem
Unable to imagine that thou art
So cruel as deep sorrow to impart
To one who holds thee in love's high esteem.
Who, from thy face, so like a child's, could dream
That such sweet loveliness did often start
In men love's worship, only to depart,
And leave them sinking in life's treach'rous stream?
Yet such thou art, in character, my love,
Thou to whom I must dedicate my life,
Praying to God that He may still give thee
Some understanding of His realm above,
And make thee willing to become my wife,
Remaining in complete accord with me.

LXXV

IN springtime, when pale primroses in flower,
Oft interspersed with blue forget-me-nots,
Are all in bloom, and the wild violet dots
The mossy field, while many a floral shower
Of new-mown hay falls in some shady bower,
Then my own heart doth, like new garden-plots,
Warm with the sun, that unto love allots
A portion of contentment as its dower.
Thus in thy haloed presence let me sing,
Lightheartedly, with thy dear hand in mine,
Through many a waving, daisy-scattered field,
Where summer doth succeed the reign of spring.
And let mine arm thy being half entwine
With roses, or whate'er the seasons yield.

LXXVI

WITH every day that summer doth conceive
(Like some good mother, happily confined)
My love its simple homily doth find
In nature's soft rejoicing, and receive
From winter's sorrowing a just reprieve,
And think on thee with joy and pain combined,
When thou art absent, and of thy free mind
Return my sentiment, I do believe.
A sweet condition to my soul is this,
Bringing the blessedness of love from thee,
Commingling with my own long-felt desire;
And giving something of thyself to me.
Ah, seal this thought with one delicious kiss;
And let my heart to happiness aspire!

LXXVII

I KNOW a path of velvet green, that sinks
From a fair hillside, underneath the trees
That blossom forth in May, and with the breeze
Shed scented flowers, all lined with summer pinks
That border it in petal-covered links.
It seems a fairy lane, well fit to please
Some lover's fancy, as the mood doth seize
The heart and lead in time to wat'ry brinks.
There with thee, Loved One, I would gladly stray;
And wander o'er these grassy slopes, to find
Saint Dorothy's ascent to *Paradise*,
Uplifting, while ascending on our way
To saintly bowers, among the woods enshrined,
Where magic scenes our noblest thoughts entice.

LXXVIII

NO time could hold my heart more fit than this,
The vernal month, when summer's early hours,
Fanned by faint odors from the newborn flowers,
Bespeak thyself, the thief of my heart's bliss,
And on thy cheek imprint the tender kiss
That bringeth love within young Cupid's bowers.
Thus would thy magic touch, with subtle powers,
Bring to my soul some metamorphosis.
No more repine, O heart! No longer weep.
No more heave sighs, or, sighing, be cast down.
Nature her balm of sunshine bringeth thee,
That in its warmth thou shalt her treasure keep.
Let not my brow be shadowed by a frown;
For love at last walks hand in hand with me.

LXXIX

NOW love returneth with new grace to me;
For why not so, since thou dost come again,
And bring fresh flowers of thought upon thy train,
That cause my spirit thus in heaven to be?
Ah! Couldst thou then but understand and see
What holier joys the heart, the soul contain,
Than thy poor sense of fleeting flesh could fain,
Thou mightest know love to eternity.
For as I would endeavor to possess
The fulness of love's wonderful attire,
The knowledge of thy spirit is more sweet,
For me to hold as mine, than that light dress
Encircling it, though filled with beauty's fire:
Thy lovely form, with every charm replete.

LXXX

THOUGH summer showers drown the seeds of love,
And flood the garden where its blossoms bloom;
Though fiery suns do dry the yellow broom
Upon the bank, and parch the field above;
Though autumn's frost shall nip the flowery grove,
And winter's snow kill life in nature's womb;
Though men grow gray, and, tottering, reach the tomb,
And all else die, and life no longer have:
Yet will I guard thee in my bosom, dear,
And seek to gain thy spirit for my own.
For no such prize hath nature to bestow
That could so well disperse the shadow drear,
Or offer to this heart, that ne'er hath grown
Accustomed life without some love to know.

LXXXI

LIKE columbine in May, or rose in June,
Like meadow flower, or clover in the morn,
All moist with early dew, that laughs to scorn
The sunbeam that destroyeth it at noon;
Like scented lavender or rue, that soon
Doth usher in the flow'ring ears of corn,
To wave in glory, ere the wind hath torn
Their emerald leaves, beneath the harvest moon:
Like this whole pageant of the season's time,
With all its glories rollèd into one,
Art thou: the fairest treasure nature bringeth,
Through every year and every age sublime:
For in thine eyes the radiance of the sun
Could warm each flower and every bird that wingeth.

LXXXII

COLD heart, that hath not felt some passing pain;
Some aching or desire to be together;
To wander hand in hand through heath or heather;
Or something that doth move the simple swain!
Were there not some possession thus to gain
Of love, or lover's wint'ry gale to weather,
As we do follow life, I know not whether
'T would be not best from living to abstain.
Then dead is he who hath not felt this joy,
This joy and sorrow mingled in his soul;
To seek for love, and feel its kindling flame,
That doth old age and youth at once annoy,
Yet holy treasures toward their threshold roll;
For lovers' tears and smiles are oft the same.

LXXXIII

WHEN thou, dear one, hast lived as long as I,
And seen the world give treasures unto youth
(Like some swift river, rushing to its mouth),
And drunk the cup of worldly pleasure dry,
And felt enjoyment passing with a sigh,
And in the night seen goblins all uncouth
Dance round the corse of pleasure, dead in truth,
And in thine heart is echoed sorrow's cry:
Then mayst thou come, with me, Love, to believe
That better than all else, is to obtain
The heart's affection of one single being,
That unto thee like adamant may cleave;
And lighten on its way life's palsied pain;
So that love's heaven thou art alway seeing.

LXXXIV

STRANGE law, whose reason man doth not possess,
That underlieth every age and clime,
That every human bosom must sometime
Its presence and its influence confess!
Whether in youth's own gay and careless dress,
Or when old age doth feel the weight of Time,
Or art describe, or poet paint with rhyme,
Or warrior bold, or maiden in distress:
This law of love its course must e'er pursue,
And join two spirits in eternal bliss;
Or each torment, with unresponsive thought,
One loving, one love wishing to undo.
Oh! may I not find love with thee like this,
But still obtain what I so long have sought!

LXXXV

FROM Thee, Eternal Power, came my life,
And by Thee was love born within my soul.
Since I have felt Time and the hours toll,
And have experienced my heart at strife,
And felt it severed oft, as with a knife,
I must with one good thought myself console.
For since I may not consummate the whole,
Nor reach the fulness of love when 't is ripe;
Then ne'ertheless have I account to give
When, unfulfilled in happiness, my days
In number cease and I on high must go,
To render unto Thee the life I live.
So be it then, that in these passing lays
I prove not faithless to the things I know.

LXXXVI

MY hope had been, that I might find in thee
The soul's ideal, as my love's recompense,
That Heaven her fairest flowers might dispense,
In prodigal profusion unto me.
But with Reality's cold eyes I see
How different doth fate, in truth, compense
The disappointment of love's blighted sense;
And turn to rhymes the hope that cannot be.
Oh, if thou shouldst outlive my broken heart,
And in compassion see thy lover dead,
And once behold on earth his crumbling bones,
Thou wouldst find in these living lines a part
Of what thou hast flung from thee, and must read
Love's epitaph upon the moss-grown stones.

LXXXVII

GOD, through his offspring Nature, gave me love,
Though man in opposition saith me nay,
And taketh from my heart its life to-day,
As through the valley of the world I rove.
Still unaccompanied, within the grove
That doth enamored beings hold at play,
My spirit must pursue its lonely way,
And strive to pluck some flowers that bloom above.
Oh, wherefore then doth Nature give desire
To have that which mankind may not possess,
And force him to endure on earth hell's fire,
And live in one perpetual distress?
Some evil power must such love inspire,
And with it masquerade in Cupid's dress!

LXXXVIII

WITH some, the law of love doth work at ease:
To some it doth seem oft to make amends.
To some the power of giving birth it sends;
To others the dull pain of a disease.
And yet how few this passion seems to please.
At first its force to extasy it lends,
Then deep into the depth of grief descends,
And on the beauty of the soul doth seize.
Yet, on the whole love is a mad possession,
Taking from men the peacefulness of life,
Bewild'ring warfare, with the heart's obsession,
That turneth Heaven into ceaseless strife,
Now seeking love's increase, now its repression,
Until the maid be merged into the wife.

LXXXIX

LET not the measure of my love make thine
Aught else but as it should be, true and sweet,
Fair youth, who first thy sweetheart's eye shall meet,
Though thou mayst read the tragedy of mine.
Oh, in thy heart make ready Cupid's shrine.
Prepare thy lips, that shall thy mistress greet,
For kisses that denial may defeat,
And on Love's altar pour Love's sacred wine.
Let myrtle crown thy brow, lest, like my fate,
Thou mayst find poison mingled in thy veins.
Make lasting thine embrace, ere 't is too late,
And worms creep in, and mould leave deathly stains.
Then may youth's sunshine warm thy chosen mate;
For nought so sweet as love through life remains.

XC

ALL else may die: the leaves that Nature bore
In springtime soon may hear the autumn's knell,
And men likewise feel death's o'erpowering spell;
Ripe youth may fall, and age in time grow hoar;
The moon doth wane, the sun sink from the shore;
Fresh flowers fade, and lose their sweetest smell;
Birds and their songs may vanish in the dell,
And crumbling stones of cities be no more.
Still shall my love, like love eternal, be
Untouched by time; yet chastened by despair,
And treasured in my heart, as all may see,
Who would likewise their own true love declare.
Thus in my soul, dear heart, would I hold thee
Till God love's injury at last repair.

XCI

O THOU, fair youth, to whom the gods have given
The gift of beauty and the power of love,
Forget not that which cometh from above,
And that affection is the child of Heaven.
Remember in these lines, that I have striven
To make thee honest, when, through Cupid's grove
Thou dost with some fair maiden lightly rove,
Not caring by what passion she be driven.
For what thou hast thou holdest but in trust,
Account of which thou must give when thou diest:
To honor those, though thou mayst love them not,
Who love thy soul, when flesh may turn to dust.
For if to honor love thou rightly triest,
Thy name shall live on earth without a blot.

XCII

BELIEVE not, gentle maid, that all is won
When first thou dost behold thy lover dear;
Nor yet that all thy path lies fair and clear
From love's first charm until its work be done.
A fickle child thou comest thereupon,
Whom thou mayst learn in time to view with fear.
Cupid, though young, may cast a shadow drear,
Whose chilling gloom shall hide thee from the sun.
A lovely valley may thy footsteps lure,
All filled with flowers that for the fair are grown,
Yet 'neath its depth lie pitfalls for the pure,
And deep contagions that are oft unknown.
Then happy art thou if thou holdst love sure,
Thus to escape the menace of his frown.

XCIII

LOVE heeds not time, nor space, nor form, nor woe,
The seasons, slain by Cupid's arrows, fade
Like misty spectres; and the night, remade,
Gives place once more to day's unceasing show.
The past gave joy; the future pain must know.
Reflection of itself makes love, 't is said,
Mirror the beauty of its thought, repaid
A thousand times to lovers when they go.
For which is most, experience or thought?
Anticipation or sweet memory?
The preparation for what love once brought;
Or last, the dwelling on delight passed by?
All these love still commands, through battles fought
With passion, lust, desire, and life's stern cry.

XCIV

HAPPY my heart, and happier far was I,
When ignorant of love's entanglement;
When I knew not its art or blandishment,
And fearless passed young Cupid lightly by.
Oh, happy hour! How vainly do I try
To now regain my freedom, and repent
The days, the hours, the years that have been spent
In giving birth to an unanswered cry!
No. Not in the review of my life's sin
Have I found punishment, or court, or trial,
Or sentence of mankind, or prison wherein
I might drink drops of poison from a phial,
Or retribution that could half begin
To be so bitter as love's cold denial.

XCV

STRIVE as I would to banish from my mind
The witchery that thy fair presence giveth,
I cannot kill the flower of love that liveth,
By that same witchery, or leave behind
The subtle fragrance that doth still remind
My soul of one whose song forever singeth,
Like some inhabitant of air that wingeth
Above those treasures that on earth we find.
For it is oft — as I indeed am now —
With those who trample love beneath the heart.
The more they seek to kill, or lay it low,
The more it liveth with new-fashioned art,
That causeth it, unwelcomed, still to grow,
And thus deny that from it they shall part.

XCVI

SINCE on thy form hath beauty laid its hand,
And set its snare for thee and me likewise,
Yet taught thee the Soul's beauty to despise;
And given thee no power to understand
The reason or the influence that planned
The depth of life, yet still to temporize;
How is such wanton thought to harmonize
With love's fierce fire by my strong passion fanned?
O! Waste not then thy beauty in its youth;
But turn it to account, lest thine own end
Shall find thee, left without an hair or tooth,
All stripped of nature's charm, which now may lend
Its power, for thee to reproduce the truth
Of that same beauty thou wouldst lightly spend.

XCVII

IN those brief moments when thou wert my own,
I drank a poison deadlier to my heart
Than that which toucheth every vital part,
And causeth man to tremble and to moan
Until the seeds of death be fairly sown,
And he in palsied attitude doth start
To rise, before his spirit shall depart,
And utter on this earth its final groan.
That poison was love's undisguised belief
That I had found eternal happiness,
True freedom from all ill, and true relief
From weary waiting and from loneliness.
Ah! Cruel fate! Thou gavest but new grief,
When I believed that Heaven my life would bless!

XCVIII

LET not thy beauty serve thee in the guise
Of some dark power, as it hath in the past.
Make for thyself some beauty that may last,
And for thy friends some gratitude likewise.
Best that they should applaud thee to the skies,
Than in old age thou shouldst aside be cast,
And when thou diest be but death's repast:
Nought but cold clay (from which the soul should rise).
Forget not that thy flesh must soon expire,
And thy youth's veil from off thy face be torn.
Then must thou from deception soon retire,
When outward beauty is by time outworn.
Oh! I would see thy soul by love reborn:
Thou for thyself; I for my heart's desire.

XCIX

WHEN I alone unto my chamber go,
To fold the shroud of night about my heart,
And mourn an empty day that doth depart;
And with sad thought compose my spirit so;
There cometh to me the dear form I know;
And, conjured with imagination's art,
It bringeth thee, so living, that I start;
And my glad tears upon thy bosom flow.
But oh, for shame! That not thyself entire
Be mine, as thou shouldst be, instead of this!
On earth both flesh and spirit hold empire,
Wherein is man the vassal of a kiss.
Yet nature must I thank, as I retire,
That though I hold thee not I know thy bliss.

C

WHEN all the world would smile in summer time,
And bear the train of nature's equipage;
And love appeareth, as an appanage,
To make each lover's atmosphere sublime;
Then would I take this pen and form a rhyme,
That singeth of my three years' vassalage
(Still held in love's unwilling peonage),
That doth my spirit and my heart begrime.
For how could love exalt, which hath, for long,
Reduced me to so destitute a state
That through each winter I must nurse my wrong,
Until each spring shall bring thee, all too late?
And when the summer cometh, my sad song
Is only to deplore that I must wait.

CI

A LITTLE flower in my garden groweth.
"Love-in-a-mist" is given as its name.
Another, of blood hue, beside the same,
Doth droop and fall upon the wind that bloweth.
This is the "bleeding heart." Like mine, it knoweth
The tragic reason for its early fame,
By some sad chance, upon the earth it came;
But soon, though full of bloom, asleep it goeth.
Two emblems have I in these garden flowers.
"Love-in-a-mist" thou must be still for me,
Deep hidden in love's own mysterious bowers,
Where, all uncertain, I can scarcely see.
Yet from my "bleeding heart" I gain new powers,
Though trampled under foot and crushed by thee.

CII

MY love makes of my life a sad display;
All full of good desires within me born,
Like youthful verdure in the early morn;
Yet by its mischief ruining each day.
No more have I the courage that shall say:
"From such poor revenue let me be torn,
Lest my life's high estate be basely shorn,
And I no longer have wherewith to pay."
No! still I hold to thy heart's company,
That would but seldom grant what I may use,
Not knowing by what power thou holdest me;
Yet giving all; that all must still refuse;
Unless this line be writ upon the sky,
And bring eternal life to this my muse.

CIII

IF in thyself doth all my love reside;
And thou, the storehouse of love's revenue,
Holdest my happiness in full review;
In thy dear eyes lies pain for me beside.
Upon my heart thou ruthlessly dost ride,
Grown callous to entreaty made anew.
Though without hope that kindness may ensue,
Let my blood flow to satisfy thy pride.
Strange cruelty, enforced by Nature's child!
Thou, friendly in thy feeling, but grown cold;
I, burned with Cupid's fire and beguiled;
Thou fearful, I the more by thee made bold;
Thou, longing to be free, untamed and wild;
I, young with love, though by its pain grown old.

CIV

THOUGH my true love should be my own undoing,
In leading me where wisdom may disprove,
Yet would I choose, in spite of all, to love,
So I might have the triumph of thy wooing.
Then might I feel that youth I were renewing;
My heart's sad livery for once remove;
And I might ride through avenues above
The common path that life hath been pursuing.
For nought could equal love, my love, with thee;
Nor could I ever tire of thy praise,
If thou all that I wish wouldst be to me,
And my soul unto Heaven wouldst upraise.
Since in love's season lovers all agree,
Then give me back what I lose in thy gaze.

CV

THOUGH thou shouldst not perceive how love in me
Doth play such havoc with my interest,
That I am, as with penury, distrest;
All torn by tragic thought and agony;
Though thou mayst think it be no harm to see
Thy lover with love's wound upon his breast,
Think not that by denying him 't is best
To foster for thyself life's harmony.
For though thou mayst deceive thy heart and mine,
Posterity, by me, thy soul laid bare,
Shall read the truth within this written line,
And judge if in thy love thou hast been fair.
All is, eternal honor may be thine,
So thou prove not my muse and my despair.

CVI

TO thee all life is but a passing pleasure,
No deeper than the thought within thy mind;
And thy short love is of a lighter kind
Than that which bringeth to my heart its measure.
How wanton is thy waste of so great treasure!
And oh, how little value dost thou find!
How vacant is thy vision, and how blind!
How empty is thy work, how vain thy leisure!
Let all thy faults foregather on that day,
When Love shall touch thee with his magic wand,
And thou at last unto thyself shall say
Thy breast is wounded, but thy heart is fond.
Yet shall I love thy spirit, come what may,
Though thou be old, and I be far beyond.

CVII

NOT clothed in transient beauty nor pale health,
Like the night-blooming flower, that displays
Its fullest glory when the violet rays
Of sunlight vanish, and, as if by stealth,
The sable realm of night, the commonwealth
Of all deceiving things, appears and stays,
Till day doth swift disperse its tricks and plays:
Not such art thou, endowed with nature's wealth.
But on thy cheek the peach-blush of the sun
Blends with the russet touch of summer's hand;
And in thine eye, fresh youth, that fades not soon,
Lives in perpetual triumph, that is won
From country joys, waving their magic wand
Beneath the sunlit skies or silvery moon.

CVIII

NO mind have I to tell thee all thou art,
Yet giving half, how can I keep the rest,
Since, knowing all, I see both worst and best,
And may not then in truth withhold a part?
Thy worst is like love's dagger to my heart;
Like Satan, in angelic vestment drest,
That bringeth pain disguised into my breast.
Such is thy worst. Let me thy best impart.
Thy best is all thyself, thy beauty's charm,
Thy glance, thy smile, thy youth's fair consciousness,
Thy power to endear, to twine thine arm
With subtle grace about love's deep distress.
Still, be it worst or best, thou dost me harm,
Though bringing pleasure with thy soft caress.

CIX

OH, Love doth play such wanton tricks with men,
That all their frailty is at once revealed,
However much they wish it were concealed;
For common wisdom lies beyond their ken.
Like some slain victim toward a lion's den,
So are they led, when once to love they yield.
The warrior tamed lays by his trusted shield;
The youth, his youth; old age its reason then.
In each condition is mankind disturbed,
Played false, or in unguarded mood surprised,
Made mad by overjoy, or else perturbed
Through sudden fear that love must be disguised.
By some such thought my love alone is curbed,
The which, I trow, thou hast ere now surmised.

CX

NOT all the years of my uncounted pain
Could teach me wisdom to myself and thee;
So I still love, and thou still holdest me;
Nor all the torture of thy fair disdain
Wring from thy lips confession, or attain
The height of misery that love must be
When, unexpressed, itself it may not free
From silent thought, or find some speech again.
Yet love, though long unkind, hath taught me this,
That I may find expression on its page;
Though not the record of its perfect bliss,
Yet, something of its value to mine age,
Mixèd with poison from the fatal kiss
That love still bringeth in its equipage.

CXI

AT least thou canst not say I have not loved,
Make accusation fit time's test of me.
Bring all thy grievance to love's court, and see
How truly my devotion hath been proved,
And what high motive hath my spirit moved.
Bring all the powers to bear that lie in thee.
At least thou canst not claim inconstancy
As comrade to that love by thee disproved.
For this sad company my soul hath still,
That is alike companion to my thought,
Precursor of my fate and fate's dark will;
My mendicant desire that thou be brought
Into my life, my empty heart to fill,
And there remain; my own and dearly sought.

CXII

OFTEN do I in meditation dream
That in my garden thou art, with my flowers:
To watch with me the foxglove, as it towers
High o'er the feathery fern above the stream.
The waving corn-flower catcheth the sun's gleam.
The yellow poppies, born in summer hours,
Now bloomed, shed all their seeds in tiny showers,
And nature in a lovely mood would seem.
So thou, in my imagination, art.
And 'neath the azured canopy of heaven,
We twain, like children, each do play a part;
Now, by the sun, beneath love's bower driven;
Now, by some wingèd creature, caused to start
And leave the goal for which we both have striven.

CXIII

IF thou who readst this verse do find herein
More tragedy than joyous thought exprest,
Oh, marvel not, that grief should not be drest
By me, in bright array, to cloak my sin.
My sin is love, love which I may not win;
And by this fact is my heart overprest
With weight of sorrow, and my soul distrest,
That I must end where others do begin.
So, if thou seekest to find within this line
Enjoyment of a jest, pray put it by.
'T is simply for love's elegy to twine
A wreath of myrtle with a lover's sigh.
For if this verse were gay, 't would not be mine,
Since lacking of my true love's love am I.

CXIV

YET ne'ertheless would I make holiday;
Exchange love's martyrdom; be light of heart;
Take note of others who enjoy love's art;
Make measurable sport of what I may;
Seek men and women who are blithe and gay;
Forget the past and love's more cruel mart,
Wherein doth sorrow play so large a part;
And mirror life in a more mirthful way.
Oh! that I might be now the youth I was,
Before love's mastery enslaved my soul:
Free in my fancy, free from life's stern laws,
When love of life alone was my heart's goal.
Then hath it need of holiday, because
For long it heareth nightly love's dirge toll.

CXV

OH! well have I examined my defect,
And all my faults and follies, yet anew
(Knowing, alas, too well, they be not few),
And marshalled them, that I may thus detect,
Which fault or folly love doth not protect,
And which would separate my heart from you.
From some like cause 't would seem you must eschew
This proffered courtship, and my love reject.
Then tell me, dear, the which I do adjure
Your honor and your honesty to name.
For 't is my right, while my love doth endure,
To ask if fault or scandal shall proclaim
Its untoward presence, and your thought allure.
For lies should not kill love, nor hurt my fame.

CXVI

OH! what a thought hath filled my brain this night,
And burned my fevered brow, as I suspect
That all these years, the love thou didst reject
Was, through strange chance, belittled in thy sight
By some foul slander or some worldly wight.
Methinks some poisonous tongue doth intersect
Both love and friendship, and its shade reflect
Unseen upon me, like some evil sprite.
What 's this, that with a start I do behold,
As darkness cloaks me round in cold embrace?
Some goblin, born of fear, by fear made bold?
Some lie that lives, yet dares not show its face?
Some tale that knows 't is false as soon as told?
Such company my love doth poorly grace.

CXVII

AND with the morn, though sunrise shall disperse
Those phantoms that dark hours oft have sought,
The spectral visage of some midnight thought
Doth still unite its poison to my verse.
In truth, suspicion makes a cruel nurse,
A poor companion, that the world hath brought
To tend the soul when, ill and overwrought,
It reaches by such means a stage still worse.
Let not my life, then, kill this tree of love,
Nor canker-worm destroy its fresh green leaf,
Nor moth devour its foliage from above;
So that its ruin shatter my belief
In love's ideal and Cupid's vernal grove.
For love that doth prove false must die of grief.

CXVIII

NOT every prince, nor king, nor emperor liveth,
After his years upon this earth pass by;
Not every painter's brush, nor poet's sigh
Bringeth to the world the passion that it giveth;
Not every sculptor's chiselled stone outliveth
The fell destruction of time's tenancy;
Nor men thought great, nor man's inconstancy,
Commit the sins that life's last court forgiveth,
Not such as these form that immortal band,
Whose names adorn the temples of past ages.
Nay, those decreed by nature to withstand
The deep emotions written o'er life's pages.
Their thoughts with all mankind go hand in hand,
Their loves make one with genius and the sages.

CXIX

HOW shall I all thy virtues here recount,
Dear one, within the limit of this line;
Or round thy brow a wreath of roses twine,
To mark the passage of the years we mount;
Or how, in this short verse, describe the fount
Of love, within my heart, that is all thine?
Within thy soul's retreat a light doth shine,
That maketh my return of poor account.
Then of my homage take what is thy due,
That which is mine to give, and free the giving.
For all I have is now derived from you,
The best of all that maketh life worth living:
A gift of nature, given unto few,
Though, when received, a cause for their thanksgiving.

CXX

'TIS strange, how little doth the world perceive
The interchange of thought 'twixt thee and me;
And how far distant from the truth it be
When, guessing of my love, it doth deceive
Itself and others, and some tale conceive
That hath no setting for my heart or thee.
Then happy are we that it doth not see
Beyond the false report it would receive.
So thou, sweet one, unmarried to my love
That all these years hath sought thee near at hand,
And seen thee bud and flower, as I strove
To wait till Cupid touch thee with his wand;
So thou, upon some pedestal above,
Locked in the secret of my heart shall stand.

CXXI

THAT which we have we value not to-day,
Yet when 't is gone its absence we deplore.
If fortune flieth and be ours no more,
Its trail of sorrow passeth on our way,
If by infirmity we cease to play
Those truant games that childhood doth adore,
Then are we all anxiety therefore;
Since many long for youth when they grow gray.
So thou, who hast not felt love's fiercest pain,
And all unconscious cast my love aside,
Mayst wake to knowledge, and would love regain
When I no longer on this earth reside,
Remembered by my love, that shall remain;
But thou, for killing me with thy false pride.

CXXII

OH, chide me not, if in this life I make
Poor tillage of the soil that men do plough;
And hold me not transgressor, if I now
Of this world's order would not so partake.
Love's harvester am I, my love at stake,
And by lost love my thought, it seems, must grow.
While others happy issue from it know,
My soul may not produce till my heart break.
Then plough, sad spirit, o'er the cheerless morrow,
And though thy husbandry be but a line,
Know that its fruit, born like a child of sorrow,
May bear thy likeness, and be thy life's sign
In after years, so that the world shall borrow
Some portion of the love that once was thine.

CXXIII

IF thou wert chainèd by the bans of life,
And wedded to another, as thy lord,
I well might pierce this heart as with a sword,
And leave to love the virtue of a wife.
But since thou holdest, by love's hand, a knife,
Made sharp by wit, thy maidenhood's reward;
Thou mayst so wound me by one fickle word,
That I am all at enmity and strife.
Unwedded then, save to youth's foolish pride,
Thou art still free, and chaste as virgin snow,
That, taken in captivity, doth fade,
And melt to water, clear as for a bride.
Then surely I through frosty drifts may plough,
To capture, in love's chase, th' unwedded maid.

CXXIV

THOU art, in truth, my muse's only guide,
That fashions by this pen thine image here,
Developèd, through loving, year by year:
The picture of thy beauty and thy pride.
For all my verse doth hold, thou dost decide,
Since, writing, I the thought of thee hold dear,
And must portray thy very joy and fear,
This mirror and thyself stand side by side.
Then, should thy true resemblance live herein
(An only offspring of my love, for me),
I treasure this thy likeness as my child;
And think thereon, as I do think on thee.
For thou art both my angel and my sin;
Since 't was my sin to be by thee beguiled.

CXXV

BACK from the sculptured chantry of the past,
The chiselled forms of memory appear,
Like stately sentinels of night, yet dear
And welcome, as they gather swift and fast;
Fast on the heels of love, returned at last,
And swift, as recollection draweth near.
The songs of th' exalted choir ring so clear,
They echo thoughts that time hath long recast.
Old chambers of the mind lie thus exposed,
By some strange magic, moved with nature's wand,
And furnished by deft hands. Doors, once fast closed,
Are opened to admit the wondrous band
Of spiritual workmen, unopposed,
Who build anew things fashioned by our hand.

CXXVI

IF all the value of my love is this,
That by its pain my verse may have some lasting,
Oh, let it bear the fruit of my long fasting;
Not in fulfilment of its end remiss,
But yielding somewhat of that holy bliss
Denied me, though on others its joy casting.
No youthful heart, no hope let me be blasting;
No maiden keep from her true lover's kiss.
Then end thy tale, sad heart that in me dieth,
For want of sunshine from my love's sweet smile.
Give unto life the love that in thee lieth;
Since what thou lovest only would defile.
Gain for thyself the name of one who trieth
Love's truth to teach, though sorrowing the while.

CXXVII

OH! lay aside thy pen, since thou must sing
Forever in a mournful minor key,
And let the world thy disappointment see,
And hear the death-knell of thy spirit ring.
Why write of love, since love thou canst not bring
Within thy craving heart, that still must be
Unsatisfied? Why on thy bended knee
Beg life from some cold, adamantine thing?
Yet at this final moment, more than e'er,
Dost thou seem near to me, dear heart, and more
Than when first found, dost thou seem sweet and fair,
And of my love possess a greater store!
Then though my voice be still, and dead the air,
In silence must I thy dear self adore.

CXXVIII

THE Wounded Eros fell upon the ground,
His bow and quiver lying at his side;
The one destroyed, the other but half tried.
An arrow, aimed at man, its way had found
Beneath the child's soft flesh; and with a sound
At once both sweet and sad, he sank and cried
In pain to Venus, beauty's queen and bride,
As she descended from the heavenly mound.
So with mankind: Love, wounded, may be seen,
Felled by his own swift shaft, that poison brings,
Instead of peace or gladness, to his heart.
Filled with the vision of what might have been,
He treasures still the very thought that clings,
Like sable night, though from it he would part.

O THOU, fair one, who never shalt be known,
Though ages cover thy frail bones with dust,
And time displace the greed of worldly lust;
Thou, whose gay spirit to my heart hath shown
How great love may become when once full-grown:
Thou, who hast been the fullness of my trust
In all things born of love's fierce fire, — and must,
Perforce, hold o'er thy head love's magic crown:
Take all I have. I lay it at thy feet.
Poor though it be, 't is thine. O ask not why!
Within these lines both joy and sorrow greet
The lenient friend, who hath not passed them by.
And may those lovers, who have found love sweet,
Judge both our hearts when in the grave we lie.